

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 05410 220814Z

14

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /150 W

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R 211710Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6734

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

INFO CINCSO

UNCLAS MADRID 5410

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR SP PN

SUBJ: TORRIJOS INTERVIEW WITH SPANISH PRESS

REF MADRID 5384

1. PANAMANIAN LEADER, GENERAL TORRIJOS, GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 20 IN MADRID. COMPLETE TEXT WAS NOT REPRODUCED IN ANY PAPER, BUT SALIENT POINTS FOLLOW, AS DRAWN FROM EXCERPTS IN SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS.

2. RE PANAMA CANAL, TORRIJOS SAID THAT A CAMPAIGN WAS UNDERWAY ALLEGING THAT PANAMA WANTED TO PLACE CANAL AT DISPOSAL OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES OR INCREASE EXCESSIVELY TOLLS. HE DENIED ALLEGATIONS SAYING THAT CANAL SHOULD SERVE ENTIRE WORLD. HE DESCRIBED PRESENT SITUATION OF CANAL AS A TIME-BOMB, INASMUCH AS NOTHING HAD CHANGED SINCE 1903 IN CANAL ADMINISTRATION AND NO COUNTRY COULD BE EXPECTED TO ACCEPT INDEFINITELY OCCUPATION BY A FOREIGN ARMY. PANAMA CONSIDERED ITS SOVEREIGNTY NON-NEGOTIABLE AND REFUSED TO ACCEPT A RENTAL PAYMENT. TORRIJOS SAID CANAL HAD BECOME ANTIQUATED WITH RESPECT TO TRANSIT OF LARGE VESSELS SO THAT ENLARGEMENT OR NEW CANAL WAS NECESSARY. NEITHER COULD BE DONE WITHOUT PANANAMIAN

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PAGE 02 MADRID 05410 220814Z

CONSENT.

3. TORRIJOS WENT ON TO SAY THAT MOST COUNTRIES BACKED PANAMA AS DEMONSTRATED IN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING, BUT U.S. USED ITS VETO, THE RECOURSE USED "BY THE STRONG" WHEN THEY ARE WRONG. SHIFTING TO A MORE CONCILIATORY TONE, TORRIJOS SAID RECENT EVENTS INDICATED U.S. WAS SHOWING MORE INTEREST IN RESOLVING CANAL PROBLEM SO THAT HE HAD CONFIDENCE IN REACHING SATISFACTORY SOLUTION. HE REFERRED TO APPOINTMENT OF BUNKER AS NEW AMBASSADOR AT LARGE AND, DESPITE HIS REPUTATION AS A TOUGH NEGOTIATOR, WAS PLEASED THAT HE HAD DIRECT ACCESS TO PRESIDENT.

4. RE CHILE, TORRIJOS SAID THERE WERE TWO TRENDS IN LATIN AMERICA: AN IDEALISTIC LEFT AND A RIGHT WHICH WAS EGOISTIC AND OPPOSED TO CHANGE. TORRIJOS SAID THAT NO EXTREMISM WAS GOOD. HE BELIEVED IN "SOLUTIONS AND NOT IN SCHEMES."

5. TORRIJOS SAID HE HAD COME TO SPAIN TO EXPRESS THANKS FOR LATTER'S SUPPORT OF PANANAMIAN CAUSE AND TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH MOTHER COUNTRY. HE ALSO WANTED TO SEE SPAIN'S SHIPBUILDING TECHNOLOGY AND FISHING INDUSTRY.

6. TORRIJOS SCHEDULED DEPART MADRID SEPTEMBER 21 FOR YUGOSLAVIA AND ITALY.
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